

A  
DIALOGUE  
ON  
BEAUTY.  
IN THE  
MANNER of PLATO.

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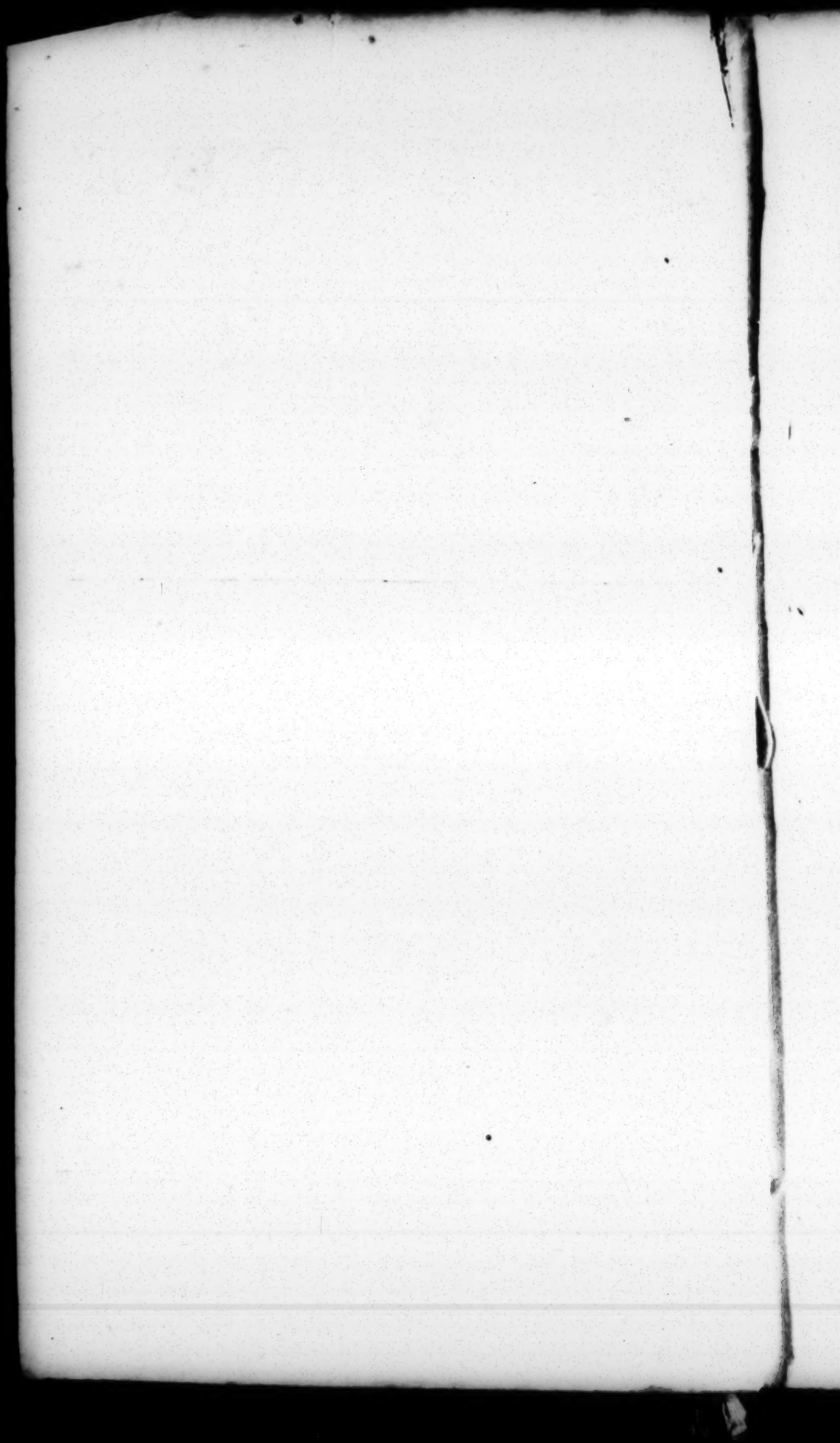
THE SECOND EDITION.

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T O

*Mr. Dodington.*

DEAR SIR,

**T**AKE the Liberty to send you a Dialogue in Imitation of PLATO, of which I shewed you an imperfect Sketch, when you was last in the Country. I am so much pleased with this agreeable Manner of Writing, which, by enlivening Philosophy with the Charms of Poesy, entertains at once the Understanding and the Imagination, that, if you approve of

A 2                      this

this first Essay, I may perhaps endeavour to divert you with some other Performances of the same Nature. It is, indeed, owing to you, that I ever attempted to write any thing in this Way: For, tho' I am as fond of PLATO as of any of the ancient Poets, I should not have entertained a Thought of imitating him, had not some *Socratic* Conversations at EASTBURY, in which I had the Pleasure to bear a (very little) Part, first made me conceive it an Attempt not altogether impracticable.

As the different Opinions in Morality, debated in these Dialogues, are the strongest Lineaments, by which Characters are distinguished; so these Representations of them may be looked on as serious Comedies, more just and instructive, as well as more decent and refined, than those of a lighter sort, which represent Humane Life under its more superficial Appearances. I only entertain you at present with one single Character (besides that of SOCRATES himself) as innocent and as beautiful as can be formed by my Imagination, but simple and uniform:

The



The various and inconsistent Characters of a *PROTAGORAS*, a *HIPPIAS*, or an *EUTHYPHRON*, tho' void of Beauty, may furnish no less agreeable Entertainment in some future Dialogues.

THE principal Motive of publishing this little Piece, is an Ambition to have the Honour of presenting it, by your Hand, to his Grace the *DUKE of DORSET*, as a Specimen of my Duty, since my Attendance may perhaps not be required.

As nothing of this Kind has been attempted in our Language, it is very uncertain what Success it may find: Some few Dialogues have indeed been received with just Applause; but none of them are strict Imitations of *PLATO*, or much designed to resemble him. The Few, who read his Works with Taste, will find in this Sketch so much Resemblance of them, as may engage them to look on it with the same Indulgence we are apt to entertain for a new Face, which has some Lineaments of a beloved Friend, or Mistress. Such as are unacquainted with

with his elegant Manner of Writing, should methinks be the more pleased even with a faint Imitation of it, since its great Disproportion to the inimitable Beauty of the Original will not be visible to them.

HAD I no farther View than to gain it a favourable Reception from the Men of Literature and Politeness, nothing could have a greater Influence on them, than the Favour of HIS GRACE'S Protection, had I the Presumption to ask it : But, to speak freely, the Subject of it has led me to a more nice and flattering Ambition, by inducing me to design it as a not uninstruative Entertainment for young Ladies, even of the highest Rank. To engage them to read it, I have endeavoured to give the beautiful Nymph in the Dialogue every Accomplishment, every Ingenuity, agreeable to a refined Education. To shew them with how much Ease they may enter into the Reasoning Part of it, I have avoided giving her the least Tincture of Philosophy, the least Degree of Knowledge, unsuitable to her early Age or Sex.

Sex. A mere Readiness of Apprehension, and an ingenuous Desire to be informed, lead her on with Pleasure thro' a System of Beauty entirely new to her, and discover to her View the secret Foundations of Moral Excellence. To recommend it to them in the most prevailing Manner, my Imagination, if unrestrained, would suggest a Thought beyond my utmost Hope ; a Thought almost too extravagant to be formed into a Wish. You, who are so well acquainted with my Romantic Temper, will easily conclude it must be some Scheme worthy to be preserved in the Annals of *La Mancha* : And tho' I do not yet dream of the Government of an Island, I will own to you, that I should esteem myself as happy as *Sancho*, when in Conversation with the Dutches, had I the Honour to find a Fair Patroness in HIS GRACE'S Family.

To apply for a Permission of this Nature, is so very tender and delicate a Point, that it would be trespassing too far on the Friendship you have so long honoured me with, to endeavour to en-



gage you in it: Were I inclined to take Advantage of the generous Warmth, with which you espouse every thing proposed in my Favour, I could find a pleasant Expedient to overcome your Delicacy, by insinuating that, unless you obtained this Permission for me, I should be tempted to leave this Orphan to your Guardian Care, by addressing it to you in this plain familiar Epistle. I am very sensible of the Pain every thing of this Nature is apt to give you: But, in this Instance, it would be made agreeable to you by the Assurance of receiving HER GRACE'S Thanks for skreening Her, in so handsome a Manner, from the Importunity of,

DEAR SIR,

*Your most Obligated,*

*and most Devoted*

*Humble Servant.*

GEORGE STUBBES.





A  
DIALOGUE  
IN THE  
Manner of PLATO,  
BETWEEN  
*SOCRATES* and *ASPASIA*.  
Occasion'd by her sitting for her Picture.

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SOCRATES. ASPASIA.

SOCRATES.



HAT smiling Graces  
has the Pencil bestowed  
on the lovely Nymph  
in this finished Piece!  
The falling Flowers,  
shattered from the Fold  
of her Garment, are  
too proper Emblems of the bloomy  
Treasure she cannot long preserve un-  
B faded;

faded ; and the fond Concern for them, that appears in her Look, makes an agreeable Discovery of her Innocence and Simplicity.

Say, fair *Aspasia*, how can you refuse to crown with your Approbation our just Applause of the Painter's Art? Can you alone, of all this numerous and select Assembly, be displeased with so beautiful a Representative of yourself? Or, do you continue silent, that it may the more resemble you?

ASPASIA.

Can you expect me to join in praising my own Picture?

SOCRATES.

Not, if that Praise had belonged to yourself. You might, with Safety as well as Decency, leave us to commend that curious Web, which has so well employed your Hand: but it was not your Needle, I presume, that traced out this lovely Figure on the Canvas.

ASPASIA.

It must resign that Praise to the Pencil.

SOCRATES.

Here then it becomes the Painter only to be silent.

As-

ASPASIA.

He seems to think so, by his conscious Modesty. But have not I too an Interest in this Picture, which obliges me to the same Regard of Decency?

SOCRATES.

You mean, I suppose, on account of its being yours.

ASPASIA.

Is not that a very sufficient Reason?

SOCRATES.

We are then only obliged to forbear giving just Praise, when we are conscious that it will be reflected back again on ourselves; and the Possession of such a Treasure of Beauty is not commended, but desired: Had I the Happiness to call it mine, I should expect the Envy of Mankind, not their Praise; nor would the Consideration of its being my Property, in the least restrain me from admiring or celebrating its Charms.

ASPASIA.

I leave you to consider, how well it might become you to flatter it; but there must certainly be some inviolable Reason, that forbids me to join in that Flattery.



SOCRATES.

It is perhaps its Resemblance of you, that makes you look on yourself as equally concerned in the Compliments paid to it.

ASPASIA.

You have generously furnished me with an Argument against yourself, by assigning the true Reason, why it would be an Indecency in me to commend it : but perhaps you have the Malice to insinuate, that there is more of Flattery in it than of Resemblance.

SOCRATES.

On the contrary, I allow that your Features are truly, though faintly, represented ; there is indeed a Delicacy in them, which has escaped the Pencil.

ASPASIA.

Your excessive Praises give me Pain.

SOCRATES.

I did not apprehend that Effect from them.

ASPASIA.

Did you then think me insensible?

SOCRATES.

The suddain Rose that dawns on your Cheek, is a plain Indication that your  
Senti-



Sentiments are no less delicate than your Features. But here the nicest Modesty has no just Cause to be alarmed : For why indeed should you imagine yourself more concerned in the Commendations bestowed on the same Set of Features in your Face, than in your Picture?

ASPASIA.

You will perhaps tell me, they were not delineated there by my own Art.

SOCRATES.

I might doubtless repeat the Observation without the least Injustice to you : but you are so very nice, that you would perhaps fancy an Argument, like a Garment, tarnished by once being used. I must therefore supply you with a perpetual Variety of new Reasonings, that are fresh and unfulled, if I would gain your Attention, while I prove to you that That Beauty is not your own, which the Painter has Power to imitate.

ASPASIA.

I never thought the Title I have to my little Stock of it, would have been disputed.

So-

SOCRATES.

Would you then lay a Claim to the Beauty belonging to Another Being, perfectly distinct from yourself?

ASPASIA.

I hope I am not so vain.

SOCRATES.

You allow that a Garment is distinct from the beauteous Limbs it enfolds, or an Instrument from the Hand it employs.

ASPASIA.

I do not apprehend the Consequences of the Concessions you would ensnare me into.

SOCRATES.

You have then no Title to the beautiful Colours, that shine in that elegant Dress, or in that fluttering \* Machine, which your Hand (moved, I fear, by this unpleasing Dispute) waves with such restless Agitation.

ASPASIA.

I own my Pretensions to these Colours would be ridiculous, were I to attribute them to myself.

\* The Fan.

S O C R A T E S.

What then, if your Hand be only a more curious Instrument employed by you, and your Body a more beauteous Garment you are cloathed with ; have you any better Pretensions to their Form or Colour ?

A S P A S I A.

None, but the very same I have already given up. But, if I must (with a Sigh) resign my Title to the pleasing Appearance of this plain Dress, as you would have me call it ; tell me, what kind of Creature then am I, who have, it seems, been only the Wearer of it ? I could not have been better concealed under it, had it been intended for a Masquerade.

S O C R A T E S.

You are a Form too refined for Sense, too delicate to be seen unmasqued ; a Mind embellished with the various Charms of Thought and Reason, Fancy, Wit and Judgment ; and capable of disputing, not only with the Shadow of *Socrates*, but even with *Socrates* himself. A Being, graced with so far superior Perfections, must sure disdain the borrowed Beauties



Beauties of external Shape and Colour,  
void of the least Resemblance of itself,  
and unworthy to be compared to it.

ASPASIA.

I am so doubtful of any Right that I  
can plead to these superiour Charms, that  
I apprehend it would be very unsafe for  
me to resign my Pretensions to the hum-  
bler Beauties, I still think I may better  
call my own. You say, they have no  
Resemblance of those Intellectual Charms  
you are so much captivated with : But  
here I demur ; I have heard, or read  
some-where, that an Image of the Mind  
is delineated in the Face.

SOCRATES.

This, I am afraid, was the Language of  
some Poet or Lover ; Teachers of a sha-  
dowy kind of Philosophy, artfully con-  
trived to deceive, but easily taught to va-  
nish at the approaching Light of Reason.

ASPASIA.

The prevailing Force of Reason, in  
effacing these delusive Shades, would fur-  
nish a new Experiment in Optics, no  
less curious than those invented by Sir  
*Isaac Newton* himself, and perhaps no  
less proper to entertain the Tribe of Phi-  
losophical



lofophical Ladies : But I have ſeen ſo many Triumphs of this ſhadowy Philoſophy, as you are pleaſed to term it, over the boaſted Power of Reaſon, that I deſpair of ever ſeeing an Inſtance of the contrary.

SOCRATES.

Your Curioſity may eaſily be ſatiſfied by anſwering a plain Queſtion or two. Can you diſcover any Reſemblance between Sounds and Colours?

ASPASIA.

I do not perceive any.

SOCRATES.

The Reaſon is, becauſe they are Objects of different Senſes. And would not then the Difference be yet wider, between ſenſible Objects and ſuch as are beyond the Reach of all the Senſes ; as, for Inſtance, between Colour and Thought?

ASPASIA.

I conceive it would.

SOCRATES.

What Reſemblance then can you find between Minds and Bodies?

ASPASIA.

I own I cannot discern the least Shadow of any.

SOCRATES.

If so, I fear you will find it difficult to transfer from your Cheek to your Mind those trifling Roses and Lillies you are so fond of.

ASPASIA.

I would not despair of it, if I had your Assistance.

SOCRATES.

To oblige you, I will do my utmost towards it.

ASPASIA.

I am all Attention.

SOCRATES.

Such a Condescension from a beautiful Nymph to a Philosopher is very engaging : But I am utterly unable to proceed one Step farther than you assist in the Argument ; and must therefore insist on your giving me the Pleasure of attending to you in my Turn.

ASPASIA.

What Assistance can Knowledge receive from Ignorance ?

[ II ]

SOCRATES.

Had either of us attained to the Knowledge of what we search after, we should want no Aid in communicating it : But since I fear we are both unknowing, it will be necessary for us both to join in the Enquiry.

ASPASIA.

I had conceived better Hopes from your Instruction : But alas ! what Success can we promise ourselves from our mutual Ignorance ?

SOCRATES.

The Search after Truth will not be fruitless, if I can be so happy as to engage you in it.

ASPASIA.

You must then instruct me, how we are to proceed in this new kind of Chase, unknown to *Diana* and her Nymphs ; and assign to us our different Parts in tracing the Fields of Knowledge.

SOCRATES.

It is enough for me to start the Game you will successfully pursue : An uncommon Faculty of doubting is all the Assistance I pretend to contribute ; I resign to

you the nobler Province of resolving the Doubts proposed.

ASPASIA.

You have methinks divided our Labours a little unequally: I must applaud your Prudence, though not your Justice, in reserving to yourself so much the easier Part.

SOCRATES.

You will be agreeably surpris'd to find that the Part I assign to you, has no manner of Difficulty in it: The Make of my Understanding is so very peculiar, that I am never doubtful in any Point, that is not perfectly clear in every one's Judgment, except my own.

ASPASIA.

Since your Manner of Doubting will give me so little Perplexity, I readily submit to the Task you have allotted to me: But how can any curious Discovery be imagined to result from such obvious Queries?

SOCRATES.

These trifling Queries, and perhaps feigned Uncertainties, are the Seeds of Knowledge, which remain unfruitful in my own Breast, as in a barren Soil; but  
when



when transplanted into a more fertile Understanding, soon shoot up, and grow to Maturity. I methinks already begin to perceive a suddain Doubt, springing up in my Mind, and waiting your Decision : If you make the Experiment, you will see with surprisè, how rich an Harvest of Knowledge so slender a Grain may produce.

ASPASIA.

I long to try my Skill on a Problem so easy, and yet so instructive: If it be such as you have represented it, I shall resolve it with Pleasure.

SOCRATES.

Tell me then, are you of Opinion that the Body was only designed for an Ornament to the Mind, or rather for an useful Instrument or Machine?

ASPASIA.

For the Latter most unquestionably.

SOCRATES.

I fear we have then been in the wrong in considering it merely as a Picture or a Statue: Let us suppose it rather to resemble a Lute.

ASPASIA.

What Comfort will this new Comparison afford?

SOCRATES.

Methinks I espy a Glimmering of Hope arising from it. But your Curiosity (or Impatience) has diverted me from the Question I should have proposed. Confess ingenuously, would you not smile at one of your Companions, who was Mistress of such an Instrument as we are speaking of, curiously framed, and adorned with all its tuneful Furniture, and yet knew no Use of the various Frets or Strings, but considered it merely as an empty Toy, made to please the Eye?

ASPASIA.

Even a Child could not want the Sagacity to discover, that it was formed for Sound, rather than for Sight.

SOCRATES.

And yet a Nymph, tho' observing in herself so many curious Faculties designed for nobler Purposes, seems very capable of a Mistake, nothing less obvious, tho' not altogether so innocent, in imagining herself to be such a pretty useless Toy. This severe Reflection is only an Aside,

not

not designed to offend your Ear ; an Ingenuity I have learnt from the Writers of Modern Comedy. But, to proceed in our Argument : Do not you apprehend that there is some peculiar Commendation due to Her who is truly Mistress of a Lute, different from that of the Owner, or the Maker of it?

ASPASIA.

You mean perhaps the Skill of playing on it.

SOCRATES.

Your Conjecture is happy : Harmony may lead us to a right Conception of Beauty. The Nymph and the Lute, you see, both of them contribute to the Production of Harmony : But is it not more justly owing to the Nymph, who is the Principal Cause of it, than to the Lute which is only subservient.

ASPASIA.

If Harmony be like Beauty, I willingly allow the Nymph to have the greater Share in it.

SOCRATES.

Your Determination is just : I hope you would not repent the Justice of it,  
should

should I make you apprehend the Consequence.

ASPASIA.

I hope you do not suspect me of so much Disingenuity.

SOCRATES.

Consider it again : I scorn to take Advantage of a Concession obtained by Surprise. You have decreed, that the Harmony is more justly owing to the Nymph than to the Lute.

ASPASIA.

No Advantage you can make of it will induce me to reverse so just a Sentence.

SOCRATES.

If then the Body be the Lute, the Mind the skilful Nymph, who commands its harmonious Powers ; the Beauty or Harmony resulting from thence is principally to be attributed to the Mind.

ASPASIA.

Had I been aware of the artful Turn, by which you led me to this unforeseen Discovery, I had not perhaps been so easily decoyed into it : And you must pardon my Weakness, if I even yet endeavour to skreen myself from the sudden Glance of Light you have let in  
upon



upon my Mind. I am still in Doubt, whether there be so perfect a Resemblance, as you seem to suppose, between Harmony and Beauty : I own, your Inference is justly drawn with regard to the Former, but the Latter seems not fairly included in it.

SOCRATES.

Let us then consider the Nature of each of them distinctly. Of what do you take Harmony to consist?

ASPASIA.

Of various Sounds.

SOCRATES.

You allow it, I presume, to be delightful.

ASPASIA.

I am not so far insensible to its Charms, as to deny it.

SOCRATES.

Is the Ear delighted with a mere Variety of Sounds, if confused and dissonant?

ASPASIA.

On the contrary, their Dissonancy and Confusion is disagreeable.

SOCRATES.

It is then the just Measure, the Proportion or Symmetry of Sounds, which renders them harmonious.

ASPASIA.

Undoubtedly.

SOCRATES.

If Harmony be a kind of Symmetry, I was not mistaken in imagining it had so perfect a Resemblance of Beauty.

ASPASIA.

Can you shew me that Resemblance?

SOCRATES.

Beauty consists of Colours and Figures, in the same Manner, as Harmony consists of Sounds.

ASPASIA.

It seems so.

SOCRATES.

Are then all Colours and Figures beautiful, or such only as have Order, Proportion, and Regularity?

ASPASIA.

Only the latter,

SOCRATES.

Beauty then, as well as Harmony, is found to consist in Symmetry.

ASPASIA.

It plainly appears so.

SOCRATES.

And Disproportion, Disorder and Irregularity, wherever found, are Deformity.

ASPASIA.

It is no less evident.

SOCRATES.

We proposed to consider an Human Body, as resembling a Lute, I presume, not without observing some just Foundation for such a Resemblance.

ASPASIA.

That is incumbent on you to shew.

SOCRATES.

A Lute is an Instrument fitted to express a Variety of Sounds; a Human Body is a Machine formed to exert a Variety of Faculties : Are not then these various Faculties capable of being regulated by some Order, Measure of Symmetry, as well as Sounds or Figures? And, consequently, are they not fit Subjects of some different kind of Beauty or Harmony?

ASPASIA.

It seems reasonable to conclude so. But can you give an Instance of it?

SOCRATES.

The Power of Motion is one of these Faculties: Are not then the Motions of the Body capable of Measure and Symmetry, suppose in Walking, Dancing, or the like Elegancies of Gesture?

ASPASIA.

I have been taught so.

SOCRATES.

These regular Exercises of Motion, I presume, are delightful to the Beholders.

ASPASIA.

It is confessed by expiring Crowds.

SOCRATES.

Delight excites Desire; and Desire is an inseparable Attendant on Beauty. I see you are too conscious of it to deny it. If therefore the Harmony of Regular Motion be thus delightful, it is unquestionably beautiful: But, to argue fairly, I must not dissemble my just Suspicion, that the immoderate Transport you describe with so much Triumph, is owing to some more powerful Charm than the mere Harmony of Motion. To determine how far this Harmony is delightful, it will be necessary to consider distinctly the peculiar kind of Delight,  
which



which results from Beauty. Fruits, you will allow, are beautiful Objects.

ASPASIA.

Were it otherwise, it had not been the Ambition of so many eminent Painters to excel in Fruit-Pieces.

SOCRATES.

Fruits are formed at once to delight the Taste, the Smell and the Sight; but it is, I suppose, by their Fragrancy and Flavour, not by their Beauty, that the two former of these Senses are gratified; nor are the lower Appetites of Taste or Smell to be confounded with the Desire of Beauty.

ASPASIA.

The Perception of Beauty is placed in the Eye alone, as the Sense of Harmony is confined to the Ear.

SOCRATES.

The Inferior Senses are then evidently incapable of these nobler Pleasures resulting from Beauty and Harmony: But can even the Eye or the Ear be thought sufficient for the Perception of them?

ASPASIA.

What Reason is there to make a Doubt of it?

SOCRATES.

By these Senses we indeed perceive Colours, Sounds and Figures; but however agreeable these Sensations may be to the Eye or the Ear, the Symmetry and Proportion, which alone render them beautiful and harmonious, can only be discerned by the Understanding.

ASPASIA.

I confess it begins to appear a little doubtful.

SOCRATES.

The only Difficulty, in unravelling this plain Truth, is occasioned by the Perceptions of the Senses and the Understanding being blended together; and will immediately vanish, if we consider them separate: Can you imagine that the Brute Creatures, tho' furnished with these Senses in great Perfection, are capable of apprehending Beauty or Harmony; unless it be perhaps in the same imperfect Degree they seem endued with Reason?

ASPASIA.

There is not the least Appearance of their having the Capacity of tasting these refined Pleasures; unless we may give Credit to the Tale of *Orpheus*, who had  
Power

Power to charm the listening Rocks and Woods, as well as their rude Inhabitants, with his enchanting Lyre.

SOCRATES.

It is then evident, that the Understanding alone has the Power of discerning Beauty, even when discovered by the Medium of Sense. This appears yet plainer in the Perception of Beauties purely Intellectual: And consequently, the sublime Pleasure arising from Beauty, consists in the Contemplation of just Proportion, Symmetry and Order, thro' all their several Kinds and Degrees. Hence the Astronomer is charmed with contemplating the Regular Motions of the Celestial Bodies. What Wonder then, if the same kind of Regularity, even in lower Instances, affords some Degree of the same delightful Amusement to the Spectators? And if Motion, when regulated, becomes thus beautiful; the just Regulation of Faculties superior to that of Motion, must of necessity produce Beauties of an higher Order, flowing from nobler Kinds of Symmetry, more exquisitely harmonious and enchanting.



ASPASIA.

It seems agreeable to the Laws of Proportion : But I am not sufficiently acquainted with these different Orders of Beauty to form a Judgment of them.

SOCRATES.

Shall I present you with a Scale of them?

ASPASIA.

It will be equally instructive and entertaining.

SOCRATES.

Those of the lowest Class are the Beauties of Material and Inanimate Beings, with all the numerous Train of Modes and Accidents belonging to them ; the Discovery of which affords different Degrees of Delight, or strikes the Mind with horrid and unlovely Images, as they are graced with various Symmetry, or deformed by Disproportion and Irregularity. The Ornaments in Architecture borrowed from Foliage, such as Festoons or the Heads of *Corinthian* Pillars, are Imitations of a superior Order of Beauty.

The blooming Tribes of Vegetables are more beautiful than Inanimate Beings,



as partaking an inferior Life ; and the Image of their Decay is more disagreeable than that of the rudest Mass of unformed Matter, saddening the Mind with a mournful Sentiment, and filling it with a tender Concern, which has a faint Resemblance of kind Affection.

The Beauties of Sensitive Creatures are of an yet higher Order. The Perceptions they have of Pleasure, have an Appearance more agreeable, those of Pain more displeasing, than any thing we can discover in Insensible Objects : Accordingly we are delighted with the gay and smiling Idea, and grieved at the odious and offensive View of its Contrary ; or, in other Words, we are touched with Benevolence naturally arising from the Perceptions of this Kind. Such Animals as are found feeding together in Herds, and are governed by kindly Instincts and gentle Dispositions, more engage our Affections, than those of the wild and savage Kinds, by the pleasing View of Concord and Innocence, which are Shadows of Moral Beauty.

Societies of Intelligent Beings, conspiring to promote the common Happiness,

E

can

can alone furnish the true and genuine Ideas of this supreme Degree of Beauty. Their social Enjoyments and kind Affections, with all the lovely Train of Actions flowing from thence, form in the Mind the most delightful Scenes of Thought, and excite pleasing Transports of Love, mingled with Esteem and Approbation, peculiar to this kind of Intellectual Beauties; the different Orders of which may be conceived to rise above each other in an infinite Series of beautiful Beings, till we arrive at a Being supremely fair, and eminently comprehending in itself all inferior Perfections. So transcendently amiable is the Idea of Moral Virtue, that faithful Miniature of the Divine Goodness ! and such grateful Perceptions does it diffuse thro' every Mind that is susceptible of it, by its genuine Lustre, and inseparably inherent Attractions ! On the contrary, the Reverse of it is the strongest Image of Deformity, and is beheld with the most painful Dislike and Aversion.

ASPASIA.

The vast Variety of beautiful Objects,  
thus distinctly ranged in our Thoughts,  
and

and rising above each other in their different Orders and Degrees, form the most glorious View that can be presented to the Understanding; and may justly be esteemed the Source of the most refined Pleasures, if the Understanding be at all susceptible of Pleasure.

SOCRATES.

Since each of the Inferior Faculties has a distinct Pleasure annexed to it, why should the Understanding alone be thought void of Delight? And whence should the noblest Pleasure be derived, but from the highest Faculty? And as the Pleasures of Sight consist only in the Discovery of agreeable Objects, wherein can the Pleasures of the Understanding consist, but in the Contemplation of Beauty; a superior kind of Delight, peculiar to itself alone, and truly worthy of so Divine a Faculty? Hence the Pleasures of the Understanding are perpetually enlarging, as it extends its Views to Objects of greater Beauty and Excellence; while those of the subject Appetites are all of them confined to narrow Limits. And as a larger and a more delightful Prospect lies open to a more extensive Know-



ledge, so the Pleasures necessarily arising from Knowledge must be infinitely enlarged and extended, beneath the boundless Survey of Omniscience : Thus we even partake of the Divine Happiness in the Contemplation of Beauty.

ASPASIA.

If this be a just Account of the Delight resulting from Beauty, how immensely does it transcend all our other Enjoyments ! How do the Objects of every meaner Desire fade and lessen to the View ; and how despicable do they appear, when compared with the more enlarged and more exalted Objects of the Understanding ! But, to descend to the lower Subject which was under our Consideration : In what Part of the Scale of Beauty do you place the Harmony of Regular Motion ?

SOCRATES.

This is certainly a Beauty of the lowest Class : But if even the Regular Motions of the Human Body are beautiful, we may compute from thence the greater Degrees of Beauty produced by the just Regulation of its superior Faculties.



ASPASIA.

No Treasure could so well deserve our Care and Pains in making the Computation.

SOCRATES.

This most curious of all Machines is instrumental to the Mind in exerting many far nobler Faculties than that of Motion ; it has its various Organs of Sense, Cells of Imagination, Repositories of Memory, and Mints of Thought and Perception ; the secret Springs of the Passions are not less exquisitely wrought than this Intellectual Machinery ; and, above these less amiable Perfections, there are diffused thro' its whole Frame tender Instincts of Benevolence, and gentle Impulses exciting every Moral Sentiment in the Heart. The Harmony resulting from the Regular Exercise of these various Faculties conveyed to the Senses by the enchanting Powers of Speech and graceful Action, and borrowing new Attractions from the becoming Veil of a beauteous Form, raises, not Delight and Desire alone, but Tenderness, Esteem and Affection, with all the noble Ingredients of that elegant Passion,

Passion, which every beautiful Virgin is so ambitious to inspire.

ASPASIA.

I fear, there are few of us, who can be charged with an Ambition so refined.

SOCRATES.

The Ambition, I believe, is universal; tho' the Art of conducting it may perhaps be a little uncommon.

ASPASIA.

I apprehend that Nature contributes more than Art to render it successful: It is Nature that bestows the Charms —

SOCRATES.

— Of a beautiful Person, I suppose: But is the mere Possession of the finest Lute sufficient to produce Harmony?

ASPASIA.

Not if a skilful Hand be wanting, I confess.

SOCRATES.

A beautiful Body you have allowed to be such an harmonious Instrument.

ASPASIA.

I do not deny it.

SOCRATES.

The Harmony it is framed to excite, results from regular Action.

ASPASIA.

I do not expect you to prove the same thing to me twice.

SOCRATES.

Are Symmetry and Order the Effects of Chance, or of Design?

ASPASIA.

Of the Latter.

SOCRATES.

Design and Knowledge are then the Parents of Beauty.

ASPASIA.

It is their genuine Offspring.

SOCRATES.

And these are Attributes of the Mind.

ASPASIA.

They are only seated there.

SOCRATES.

The Mind is then the Source of Beauty : Nor can the Stream contain any thing, but what flows from the Source.

ASPASIA.

Impossible.

SOCRATES.

If then the Stream be beautiful, the Source itself is such : Thus the Mind is the first and highest Beauty.

ASPASIA.

You have led me, I fear, by some Enchantment, thro' a treacherous Labyrinth, to the same Point from whence we set out : Your subtle Train of Reasoning has ended in bringing again to my View those Intellectual Charms, which your Argument (or Stratagem) has rendered victorious. How can you with Honour boast your Success in betraying a Cause I had engaged you to defend ? or, triumph in misleading a simple Damsel, new to the Deceits of Argument, and trusting to your Guidance ?

SOCRATES.

Your Reproaches are groundless and unjust. I have indeed been obliged to give you repeated Views, and as it were to lead you to different Prospects of these Intellectual Beauties, too agreeable to displease, too innocent, I thought, to offend : But, notwithstanding these Beauties are originally inherent in the Mind, you may remember that the Body has been allowed its just Share in them. It has been considered as the glorious Instrument of displaying them in a fairer Light, by lending a Power of exerting them



them in Action, and cloathing them in the amiable Dress of Colour, Speech and Motion. 'Thus, to pursue the Allusion we have made choice of to illustrate this noble Subject ; the Skill of Harmony, like every other kind of Knowledge, is seated in the Understanding: but it must have remained a mute inglorious Theory had not the many-chorded Shell, by lending its Assistance, given it a Power to charm the Ear, and to raise such exquisite Delight and Admiration. And can you then complain, that the beautiful Machine, you have so just an Interest to defend, has been injured or neglected ; since it has been allowed, under the Direction of the Mind, to be the Instrument of producing so divine an Harmony ?

ASPASIA.

If such are the Advantages the Mind receives from the Body, they who are so happy as to be graced with its invisible Beauties, have indeed just Cause to value and esteem this wonderful Medium, contrived by Art Divine to render them capable of assuming a visible Glory, and of charming the Senses : But is every Mind

F

thus

thus beautifully formed, and furnished with the Skill of rightly employing this Instrument of displaying its unseen Perfections?

SOCRATES.

Your Question is of Moment, and well deserves to be considered : But you are not perhaps aware what a various Swarm of Reasonings you have provoked by moving it. Methinks I already perceive them, issuing in a long and intricate Train from the Hive, and clustering about us : Had we not better leave them silent and undisturbed in their peaceful Cells?

ASPASIA.

I am not afraid of engaging with their Numbers, under your Conduct and Protection : Let them muster all their gilded Legions, and sound their martial Alarms ; their Variety, and their Murmurs, will afford us an agreeable Entertainment.

SOCRATES.

See ! They come, obedient to your Call : Not the softest Gales that salute the newly wakening Spring, nor the Breath of sweetest Flowers, could invite them forth with a more prevailing Charm. You gave the Provocation by a curious Enquiry into  
the

the native Beauties of Minds, and you must arm yourself with Patience to attend the Result of it. You do not, I presume, suspect that Nature has left any of her Works imperfect or unfinished.

ASPASIA.

Such a Suspicion were unworthy of the Wisdom that shines in them.

SOCRATES.

If then the meanest Works of the Divine Hand are endued with some Degrees of Beauty, can it be reasonable to think the nobler Productions are neglected?

ASPASIA.

On the contrary, there is just Reason to expect they should be graced with larger Portions of it.

SOCRATES.

Minds then cannot be supposed to have been made defective, or destitute even of the Pre-eminence of Beauty due to Beings of a superior Nature.

ASPASIA.

Your Reasoning is unanswerable, yet seems too plainly contradicted by Experience.



SOCRATES.

Can there be any Disagreement between Reason and Experience?

ASPASIA.

The Appearance of it, in this Instance, seems hard to be reconciled.

SOCRATES.

The Endowments bestowed by the Divine Hand are infinitely various, and distributed amongst an infinite Diversity of Creatures, every Kind enjoying something peculiar to themselves. Hence it is observable that the lesser Beauties, belonging to Creatures of an inferior Rank, are often found wanting in those of an higher Order : But that Want is amply recompenced by some different Perfection of a nobler Kind. Do not you remember an Ode of ANACREON to this Purpose, in which Nature is represented, as having distributed all her various Magazine of Horns and Tusks and Claws amongst the inferior Animals, and as being necessitated to leave the Race of Women unarmed and defenceless? And yet the Poet observes, that she found an happy Expedient to arm them with a nobler Power  
of



of Conquest, by giving them the irresistible Armour of Beauty.

ASPASIA.

I have seen it, amongst some other Pieces of that Poet, translated with the utmost Tendernefs and Elegance, by the same Hand that obliged the *British* Virgins with the beautiful \* Remains of SAPPHO, more precious in their Esteem than an *Iliad*.

SOCRATES.

If then the Authority of ANACREON be admitted, may we not conclude that, if Minds are not beautifully framed by Nature, their peculiar Excellence consists in something equivalent or superior to a beautiful Frame?

ASPASIA.

Perhaps so : But what Notion can we form of any such superior Excellence?

SOCRATES.

Is the Capacity of being beautifully formed by the Hand of Another, or the Power of forming their own Beauties, more suitable to Beings of the noblest Kind?

\* Spectator, Vol. III. N. 222, 229.

ASPASIA.

The Latter, I conceive to be a far more transcendent Perfection.

SOCRATES.

Let us then consider, whether this Power be not the peculiar Privilege of Minds. A Power of Action, directed by Knowledge, you will allow to be both necessary and sufficient to the Formation of Beauty.

ASPASIA.

I fear my allowing it, or not, will be of little Consequence, unless you can make it clearer to me.

SOCRATES.

Such Beings, as are merely Passive and Unintelligent, however capable of being formed into a Variety of regular and beautiful Figures, must be incapable of forming themselves.

ASPASIA.

Their Incapacity is evident.

SOCRATES.

The Forming Powers must then be furnished with Activity and Intelligence.

ASPASIA.

I perfectly comprehend the Necessity of it.

So-

SOCRATES.

And these are the Qualities of Minds;  
as the contrary Qualities, Inactivity and  
Unintelligence, belong to Bodies.

ASPASIA.

I shall make no Difficulty in admitting  
it.

SOCRATES.

The Formation of Beauty is then the  
Work of Minds: And if external Beauty  
flows from their External Action on Bo-  
dies, what can be produced by their In-  
ternal Operation, but an Internal Beauty,  
a Beauty of their own?

ASPASIA.

I am too well pleased with this Power  
to be willing to dispute it.

SOCRATES.

You will then cease to wonder that  
the Mind, in its first Production, was  
left by the creating Hand of Wisdom void  
of Beauty or Deformity; like a Canvas  
pure of every Colour, and unmarked  
with the slightest Figure or Out-line. Its  
several Faculties are the Pencils, by the  
right Use of which, Knowledge, Truth  
and Goodness are gradually delineated  
on it; as by their Neglect or Abuse, it is  
stained

stained with Falshood, Error and Deformity.

ASPASIA.

The Task of finishing this important Piece with such weak Colours, and such slow uncertain Pencils, is difficult and full of Hazard; and since so few are found to perform it with Success, it had methinks been more eligible to have had a perfect Portraiture of this Moral Beauty originally delineated in the Soul by the unerring Hand of Nature.

SOCRATES.

Had it been left to their own Choice, every intelligent Creature would have aspired to every Perfection; and thus the beautiful Order and Gradation of subordinate Beings, which adorns the Universe, would have been lost and confounded. But here your Interests have been much better consulted than you apprehend; and the Reform you would make in your Nature, would deprive you of its most valuable Qualifications.

ASPASIA.

I rather think it would secure me from its Imperfections.



SOCRATES.

You might in the same Manner have been secured from Pain by Insensibility, as from Imperfection in any kind by an Incapacity to attain the corresponding Excellence, had you so far wanted Courage, as to accept such an inglorious Security.

ASPASIA.

As tender a Creature as I am, I am not altogether so mean-spirited.

SOCRATES.

You would not, I suppose, be contented to resign the delightful Faculties of Sight or Hearing, in order to avoid disagreeable Sounds or Colours.

ASPASIA.

I am not yet arrived to that Excess of Delicacy.

SOCRATES.

Would you submit to give up your Understanding, to purchase a perfect Safety from Error? Or, do you rather chuse Knowledge, at the Hazard of being sometimes deceived?

ASPASIA.

I see nothing so formidable in Falseness, as to be afraid of encountering it.

SOCRATES.

Are then merited Esteem or Affection, Praise or Virtue, Worth or Moral Excellence, in your Opinion desirable? Or, are you so fearful of the opposite Blemishes and Imperfections, though at your own Choice to avoid, as to wish all this beautiful Part of your Character effaced, by quitting the Power to act in a Moral Capacity?

ASPASIA.

I have already made so many Concessions of this Nature, that it would be very unfair to retract them by an Inconsistency in this higher Instance, if I was at all inclinable to it: But I am not contending for the giving up these amiable Qualities; tho', instead of acquiring them in a low imperfect Degree, I indeed think it would have been more desirable to have had them infused from the inexhaustible Fountain of Wisdom, in their perfect Purity and Splendor.

SOCRATES.

To accept them only on these Terms, is, in Effect, to give them up; since they appear plainly incapable of being infused in the Manner you so unreasonably desire.

As.

ASPASIA.

I fear it is an high Presumption in you thus to limit the supreme Power of Wisdom in communicating her own Gifts: Would it not much better become us to receive them as such from her liberal Hand, and even to chuse rather to have them bestowed than acquired?

SOCRATES.

On the contrary, since the overflowing Bounty of Wisdom has not thought fit directly to bestow on us these Gifts themselves, but only the Faculties designed for the Attainment of them, we ought much rather to conclude from thence, that it was even necessary as well as reasonable that these Faculties should be employed in attaining them. Had these excellent Gifts been of the same Nature with her meaner Bounties, they had probably been bestowed in the same Manner: But since they are of so far a nobler Kind, could we reasonably expect them to be imparted to us, like Beauty or Sweetness to Flowers, without any Toil or Effort of our own?

ASPASIA.

A different Manner of imparting them appears indeed very plainly to have been

most agreeable to Divine Wisdom, since it has been ordained by Providence : But whence can you infer that it was necessary ?

SOCRATES.

I do not well know : If you will take the Trouble of answering a few more Questions, you can perhaps inform me. Enquire of your own Heart : Is there any Degree of Gratitude due to a Flower for the Sweets it dispenses ? Or, does it gain your Love or Esteem by the beautiful Colours you admire in it ?

ASPASIA.

Methinks I feel at least some faint Resemblances of these Affections for this innocent and blooming People.

SOCRATES.

The Metaphor, so artfully employed by you, sufficiently shews, that you are obliged, by a Poetical Fiction, to animate them with the Sentiments of Rational Beings, before you can, even in Fancy, make them Objects of these Affections. But, permit me to enquire a little farther : Do you conceive any unfriendly Passion, any Emotion of Resentment, towards



wards them, when offended by their disagreeable Scent, or faded Colour?

ASPASIA.

I am not conscious of such Injustice to them.

SOCRATES.

The contrary Affections, due to Moral or Immoral Qualities or Actions, are placed as it were in opposite Scales, in such a Manner that neither Scale can preponderate, unless the Balance may incline indifferently to either Side. If therefore a Flower were capable of meriting Praise, it must be equally liable to deserve Blame: And if it cannot without Injustice be made the Object of Resentment, it can with as little Reason be intitled to Esteem or Gratitude. The Merit or Demerit, exciting these opposite Affections, can no more be attributed to it on the One Side, than imputed on the Other, except for some acquired Quality, something produced by itself, and at its own Choice; not wrought in it by the Power, and at the Will, of a distinct Agent.

ASPASIA.

I am sensible that the Praise can truly belong to None but an Intelligent Being,  
which

which produced and intended the beautiful Effect.

SOCRATES.

You allow that Praise is due to Moral Excellence.

ASPASIA.

In the highest Degree.

SOCRATES.

It must then have been produced by the Person deserving Praise for it.

ASPASIA.

The Praise had else belonged to Another.

SOCRATES.

The Perfections of this Kind cannot then subsist without being acquired; and must have been prevented, if bestowed.

ASPASIA.

I see there was an indispensable Necessity that this Moral Beauty should be formed in us by our own Powers, not, as I vainly presumed, by the Pencil of Nature; and I gratefully acknowledge the Divine Favour, in furnishing us with Faculties capable of so noble a Production: But I could still wish, methinks, that this important Task had been made less difficult and arduous.

The Labour must necessarily have been proportioned to the Praise, as well as suited to the Abilities of attaining it: And since all these were weighed in a just Balance by the Hand of Wisdom, must we not be left without Excuse, if we refuse to comply with her gracious Design in the Formation of our Nature? Can you then be contented, merely for the sake of declining the virtuous Toils so justly proportioned to the Strength of your Faculties, meanly to forego the agreeable Powers of Meriting and Obliging, the conscious Sense of Honour, the unfading Wreath of Glory, the secret Triumphs, and the refined Pleasures of Virtue; Pleasures, the Taste of which is the highest Excellence, and which are even merited by being enjoyed? And since Nature has kindly furnished you with the visible Charms of a Person, capable of exemplifying in Action, and displaying to the Senses this inexpressible Beauty and Harmony; can you idly suffer this mystic Lute to hang neglected, and its melodious Strains unheard?

## ASPASIA.

I extreamly regret my own Unskilfulness, which condemns to Silence so divine a Melody.

## SOCRATES.

If its delightful Charms were only to be lost in Silence, it were less to be lamented ; but alas ! these speaking Strings will not continue silent, these busy Faculties will not remain unemployed : And in proportion as their Harmony would have excelled that of every meaner Kind, their Dissonancy will be more harsh and distasteful ; whilst the much mistaken Minstrel perhaps appears transported with the jarring Sounds, and looks about on the offending Audience with an Air and Gesture demanding their Applause. And can you think the tortured Ear will be reconciled to this Engine of Discord, because it may perhaps be formed of Ivory or Cedar ? Or will the Neglect of acquiring a just Skill on it be attoned for, by the wanton Care of enwreathing it with Flowers, and adorning it with a Variety of superfluous Embellishments ?

As.



Let me conjure you, if you have any Sense of Delicacy, any Tendernefs for Distrefs, any compassionate Regard to virtuous Remorfe, to soften the Force of your Raillery on this tender Point : It gives me too much Pain, and expofes in too ftrong a Light the Follies my Youth and Innocence have been accuftomed to. I was nurfed up in Maiden Pride, and fondly deemed my blooming Beauties already half difclofed, when fcarce one little Bud appeared. True Beauty was till now concealed from my Knowledge, and removed far beyond my weak Conception. The lovely Idea remains yet unformed in my uninstructed Thought ; I am confcious of my want of Power to finifh it ; and ignorant how this wondrous Skill may be attained. You have awakened me from a golden Dream of imaginary Charms, and Beauties not my own : and can you thus leave me to weep the fleeting Treasure ?

SOCRATES.

How fweet are the Defires infused into the awakened Thought from one faint Ray of this new-discovered Beauty !

H

How

How pure the Transport! How anxious the soft Sollicitude! But dismiss your Fears: You are yet newly arrived to that early Age, in which the Sense of this nobler Beauty first begins to dawn in the Mind; if you cherish the pleasing Ardours it inspires, it will with no less Certainty rise to its mature Perfection, from the Faculties formed to produce it, than the full-blown Flower from the Seed, or the fruitful Autumn from the first tender Blossoms of the Spring. These warm and glowing Sentiments are the genial Sun-Beams, which will by degrees unfold every blooming Virtue, and swell those generous Fruits, in the Taste of which Happiness is only found to consist.

ASPASIA.

I feel new Resolution rising in me from the potent Charm of your exalted Sentiments and Eloquence divine; your Words inspire a pleasing Hope, and raise my drooping Virtue, not less desirous to lay hold on the friendly Aid, than the creeping Vine is ambitious to clasp with her Tendrils the supporting Elm, and rear to the Sun her feeble Branches. Hence-  
forth

forth it shall be my constant Care to study the Rules of this Moral Painting, of which you have taught me to design the first imperfect Sketch ; and my unwearied Endeavour, to copy with a faithful Hand its choicest Graces. I yield with full Consent the just Preference to this superior Beauty : But do you in Return allow nothing to the mere External Form ?

SOCRATES.

That too, like all other Beauties, is the Product of a Mind : tho' your Mind indeed was not consulted in the Contrivance of the wondrous Fabric.

ASPASIA.

I apprehend you ; that Praise is due to the Maker of the Lute : But has the Owner no Share in it ?

SOCRATES.

You may justly look on it, as an Ornament, no less really distinct from you than your exterior Dress, tho' more intimately united to you : It does not properly give you Beauty, but only lends you a beautiful Appearance.

ASPASIA.

It seems then that even the most perfect Beauties cannot subsist without their

proper Ornaments: I fear they owe more to them than they are willing to own.

SOCRATES.

Whatever Lustre they may be thought to borrow from Ornaments, their Ornaments receive much more in Return from them.

ASPASIA.

That, if it be not true, is at least very gallant.

SOCRATES.

The Truth of it is undeniable. Can the richest Habit appear beautiful on a deformed Body?

ASPASIA.

It would look ridiculous.

SOCRATES.

Can then a beautiful Body sit gracefully on a deformed Mind?

ASPASIA.

The Thought of it is odious and shocking.

SOCRATES.

Thus all Beauties are found to centre in the Mind.

ASPASIA.

I perceive they all proceed from it, and are referred to it.

So-



SOCRATES.

Your Mind is yourself.

ASPASIA.

I apprehend so.

SOCRATES.

I have then shewn you a Beauty truly your own ; a Beauty delineated by your own Skill, and even that Skill acquired ; a Beauty seated in the Understanding, and thence diffusing itself thro' all the subject Faculties ; a Beauty on which all your inferior Charms and Ornaments depend, and without which they can have no real Gracefulness or Value.

ASPASIA.

I know not well by what Clue you have led me to it, but I take the Discovery to be purely my own ; and can easily oblige you to acknowledge it. You have asked me a competent Number of Questions.

SOCRATES.

I have indeed taken that Liberty.

ASPASIA.

And I have answered them.

SOCRATES.

You have been very obliging.

ASPASIA.

Had the Hour of the Day been the Subject of your Enquiry ; and had I looked on my Watch, and told you the exact Number of Minutes you have wasted with me : Would this wonderful Piece of Information have been owing to you who asked the Question, or to me who answered it ?

SOCRATES.

The Information, I own, had been conveyed in the Answer.

ASPASIA.

If then the Answering Part has lain on me thro' the whole Dialogue, am not I entitled to the curious Discoveries made in it ?

SOCRATES.

I submit to the Justice of your Claim, but except against the Impropriety of your Expression : The happy Minutes have not been wasted in conversing with you ; since the Knowledge I have gained has been owing to your Part in the Conversation. May the Truths you have discovered to me, not escape out of your own Mind, and render themselves again imperceptible to you.

As-

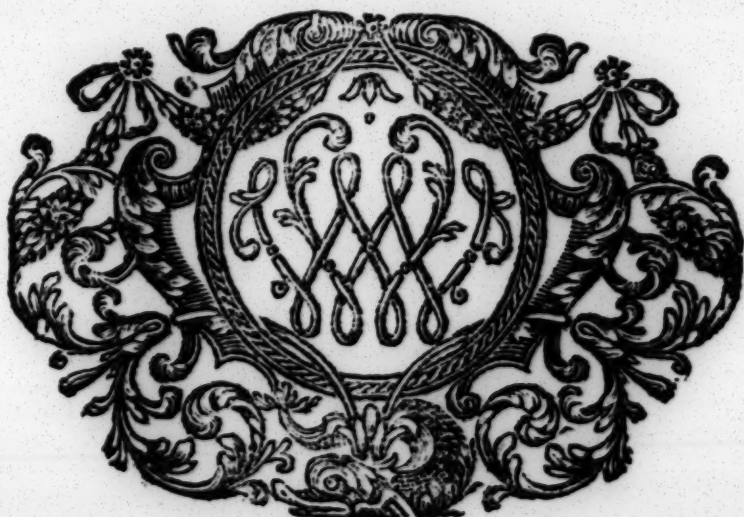
ASPASIA.

Why should you suspect me of so shameful a Relapse into my former Ignorance? Do you call in Question my Memory, or my Judgment?

SOCRATES.

You are happy in these, as in all your other Faculties: But you will soon be in Danger of hearing so many Things of a different Tendency, addressed to you in pleasing Whispers and with soft Insinuation, that I fear you will too easily be led astray from what I have now made you believe to be your own Opinion.

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